ROYAL INSTITUTE OF BRITISH ARCHITECTS.

At an ordinary general meeting held on Monday evening, the 14th inst. Signor Achille Pulli, of Naples, was elected honorary and corresponding member. A paper was read—"On a revived manufacture of Coloured Glass used in ancient Windows," by Mr. Winston, which we give in full; and a discussion ensued in which Mr. Mocatta, Mr. Papworth, Mr. Fowler, Mr. Garling, Mr. Austin, Mr. Powell, and others took part.

On the 28th the Rev. R. Burgess, B.D. will read a paper "On the Topography of the Roman Forum and the Clivus Capitolinus;" and on that occasion Earl de Grey, president, will distribute the medals and prizes.

An extra meeting will be held July 5 to close the session, when the discussion on the decorations suitable to St. Paul's Cathedral will be resumed.

ON A REVIVED MANUFACTURE OF COLOURED GLASS USED IN ANCIENT WINDOWS.

The point to which I have to direct attention is, "a revived manufacture of glass used in ancient windows,"—but, in order that the importance of the subject may not be undervalued, I wish to make some remarks, in the first place, on the harmony observable between the design and execution of glass paintings and the quality of the material of which they are composed—a harmony which, though more remarkable at some periods than at others, may yet be observed, in a greater or less degree, in all works having any pretension to originality. It is only when the perception of the artist has become blunted, and his invention paralysed, by a habit of servile, unreflecting imitation, that *all* trace of this harmony is lost. I cannot better illustrate my meaning than by contrasting the glass paintings of the middle of the sixteenth century with those of the twelfth and thirteenth.

At this early period, when the richest, the most beautiful, and the deepest colouring in glass that we are acquainted with, was employed, we always find that the picture was both designed and executed in the simplest manner. There are no complicated groups—no atmospheric effects—hardly any effect of light and shade—and no high finish. If a group is represented, the figures all appear to be in the same plane, and to be cut out by a stiff background of deep blue or red. A landscape is rarely attempted: when this is the case, it is symbolised rather than represented by trees, buildings, or other accessories, of most mediæval cut and conventional character, which always appear, by the positiveness of their colouring, to be in the same plane as the figures, and, like them, are cut out by the aforesaid stiff background. The whole expression of the drawing is conveyed by means of strong black outlines, the effect of which is usually heightened by a simple wash of shadow in half tint, the edges of which are left hard. In short, the artists of this early time seem to have aimed at producing little else than a rich mosaic, of the most vivid and harmonious hues.

I say they *seem* to have done so,—for I am morally certain that they were really as ambitious of pictorial effect as any of their successors, and that their not having achieved it resulted rather from circumstances and want of skill than from any lack of intention. Had these men really adopted a flat-style, on principle, they could hardly have failed to avoid those inconsistencies which are so obvious in their works,—such as representing a landscape at all, under such conditions,—shading the figure and giving it greater relief than the canopy under which it is supposed to be placed, and regulating the depth of the shading rather by the size of the figure than the intended position of the painting in the church.

Had they acted on a well understood principle, we might have expected to find some attempt made to lessen, if not obviate, the indistinctness resulting from a flat treatment, by means of a proper arrangement of the colouring; but the instances where the *entire* colouring of a group is strongly contrasted with the hue of the background, are so rare as to justify the supposition that they were accidental. I am, I confess, led by these and similar considerations irresistibly to the conclusion that the glass painters of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, though great colourists, were not in other respects great artists; and that whatever we find good in their works is the rich legacy of antiquity—that as we undoubtedly owe to Pagan times the art of imparting those magnificent colours to glass,* so do we owe to the influence of Pagan art that style of low relief, which, corrupted by the Byzantines, and misunderstood in the ages of *feythe*, is, nevertheless, so far as it is developed in the windows of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, so truly admirable, because so excellently well adapted to the stiff and intense colours of the period—colours so intense and unvarying in depth, as to preclude the possibility of their being made subservient to those pictorial effects which are indispensable to the satisfactory representation of a subject whose composition would rank above that of a bas-relief.

The contrast afforded by turning to a glass painting of the middle of the sixteenth century is very striking. We no longer behold a stiff mosaic depending for success almost exclusively on the richness of its colouring; but, on the contrary, a picture, brilliant, it is true, but resting its claims quite as much on its composition and general treatment as on the vivacity of its hues. Here complicated foreground groups, as well as important architectural accessories are introduced: they are delineated correctly, and highly finished. The relative distances of the various objects are preserved by means of light and shade, and the landscape background, monotonous as it may appear in comparison with that of an oil or fresco painting, recedes and disengages itself from the figures and architecture, imparting to the picture an effect of atmosphere.

The glass of which this picture is composed will be found on examination to differ widely from that used in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In general it is thinner in substance—it is always weaker in tint,—and on that account, if regarded simply as a vehicle for colour, would be far inferior to the older material. Yet for the purpose to which it is applied it could not be more suitable. Its pellucidness and lightness of tint are admirably calculated to display the high finish of the painting, to favour atmospheric effect, and vivid contrasts of light and shade. Nor does the employment of a material comparatively so flimsy and weak impart a corresponding flimsiness or weakness to the picture. A good specimen of cinque cento work will be found as imposing in effect as a window of the twelfth or thirteenth century. Let any one endeavour to recall to mind the glass at Chartres, and that filling the four windows of the Chapel of the Miraculous Sacrament, in Brussels cathedral. I am sure he will feel an impression that he has seen something at both places equally striking—something equally removed from flimsiness or poverty. The paradox is easily explained, when we consider that in the mosaics of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the effect of the glass is but little aided by contrast of colour, or by shading; whereas in the pictures of the cinque cento period, not only is the colouring arranged in broader masses, which is of itself a great assistance to a poor material, but the strongest contrasts of colour and of light and shade are employed.

I have now compared the best exponent I have been able to find of a flat style of glass painting with what I believe to be a perfect exponent of the rotund or pictorial style of glass painting, and I have endeavoured to point out that, in each specimen, the quality of the glass and mode of painting it are alike different; and further, that each kind of glass, and each mode of using it, are severally calculated to act and react upon one another, so as to set both off to the greatest advantage.

It will be useful to pursue the subject further, and show that during the whole interval which elapsed between the abandonment of the flat or mosaic style, at the end of the thirteenth or middle of the fourteenth century, and the adoption of the rotund or pictorial style, which it took two centuries to perfect in the cinque cento, a certain harmony existed between the quality of the material and the mode of working it. It would be rather a matter of curiosity than of practical advantage to speculate on the causes which led to these changes in the quality of the material and the mode of working it. If I might hazard a conjecture, I should be inclined to say that it was a change in the manufacture which induced or necessitated a change in the painting, and not the reverse; because we know that from Pliny's time, downwards, the effort has always been to improve on the manufacture of glass,—that is, to render the material more pure and pellucid, and better fitted for domestic purposes, without reference to its employment in painted windows. But however this may be, each change in the manufacture, and each change in the mode of painting were, in general, contemporaneous.

There was but little change in the quality of the glass between the end of the thirteenth century and the middle of the fourteenth, if perhaps we except the deterioration of some of the colours. The deep blue appears to have lost its sapphire-like hue, with the decline of Byzantine influences, soon after the middle of the thirteenth century. And, during the same period, the principles of the flat style were subjected to scarcely any greater violation than they had already, if not always, sustained. But in the second half of the fourteenth century, and as it would appear, in this country at least, about 1380, an important change in the manufacture of the material took place. The white glass became purer, and all the coloured glass lighter in tint. Simultaneously an equally important change in the mode of painting was effected. It is true that the colouring had become broader and less mosaic, and the designs somewhat more pictorial, previously to the change in the material in 1380—and this is particularly remarkable in the glass paintings of Germany, in which country I am strongly inclined to think that the alteration in the glass manufacture originated. But the change to which I would now particularly advert, is in the execution of the painting.

Wykeham's glass, at New College Chapel, Oxford, which is one of the earliest specimens, may be referred to in illustration of it. The outlines became thinner, the shadows broader and softer, the painting altogether higher wrought and finished, and the treatment generally more pictorial. By the end of the fourteenth century, the new style of execution was established, as we see it in the east window of York Minster; but though rotund and pictorial in principle, it was not rotund or pictorial in effect, till the end of the first quarter of the sixteenth century, when the bolder practice of the cinque cento artists broke out in all its vigour. Still, though we must regard the works of this long intermediate period as inferior alike to the painted glass of the thirteenth century and the cinque cento time, having neither the depth of colour of the one, nor the pictorial power of the other; it is impossible to examine them without perceiving that their authors must have felt that the more delicate material with which they were furnished, invited, if not demanded, a more delicate mode of execution.

Again, we may trace, in all works executed since the middle of the sixteenth century down to the present time, except, indeed, the recent imitations of mediæval glass paintings, a certain degree of harmony between the quality of the material and the mode of working it. I do not intend to enter upon the comparative merits of the mode of execution adopted by the cinque cento artists, who used an enamel colour only for the purposes of shading; and of the mode of execution adopted subse-

* The truth of this will sufficiently appear on comparing the glass of the twelfth century with the specimens of Roman and Greek glass in the British Museum. So complete an identity of colour argues an identity of manufacture, which manufacture, there is good ground for believing, was handed down from Pagan times. The strong resemblance which the most superficial observer must recognise, of the twelfth and early thirteenth century draperies and figures, to those of the Greek school of art, raises a reasonable inference that the glass painters of those times, though in all probability natives of the countries in which they practised, derived their art from the Byzantines.

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